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President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 39 (*continued*)

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/55/489, A/55/520)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.32/Rev.1)

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Since I am the lone speaker on this item in this meeting, I should like to mention that agenda item 39, "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies", is one which is very close to the heart of the Bangladesh delegation. We believe that this item, since it first appeared before the General Assembly, has articulated the aspirations and objectives of the countries that fall into the category of new or restored democracies.

We believe that the first three Conferences of New or Restored Democracies, held in the Philippines, in Nicaragua and, finally, in 1997, in Romania, have established very effectively the foundations on which democratic institutions and the process of democratization can be consolidated, and we hope that, for this purpose, the Secretary-General will provide the strongest support in the efforts of countries to strengthen democratic institutions. The support measures which the Secretary-General has presented in his report very effectively articulate the issues which are of importance, and we believe that it will be appropriate for the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.32/Rev.1, of which Bangladesh is a sponsor, by consensus.

We would particularly like to support the presence of the Secretary-General at the Fourth Conference, in Cotonou, Benin, next week. We look forward to his milestone statement on that occasion. It has been mentioned that it will be the most forward-looking statement that the Secretary-General has presented with regard to new and restored democracies and the support that Governments could receive from the United Nations system.

In his report, the Secretary-General gives us a comprehensive overview of the activities and ideas of the United Nations concerning the subject under consideration. It is also appropriate that, in outlining the continuing process of change in the international arena, the Secretary-General provides us with a powerful and ever-increasing impetus for strengthening support to the global process of democratization.

In the present international setting, only democratization can help States to effectively address many challenges of today's world. It can help States in formulating policies for the new century. Democracy and development are inseparable in the context of the present-day world. On their road to development and democratization, the developing countries of the world

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depend, to a great extent, on the cooperation and support of the international community.

The United Nations can play a major proactive role in taking forward this process through innovative and wide-ranging programmes: the strengthening and promotion of democracy should be a key, continuing objective of the activities of the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system. The Secretary-General needs to ensure this through his leadership of the system, particularly through the Administrative Committee on Coordination process. We believe it would be useful for all of us if the Secretary-General were to bring out a compendium of the pronouncements on democracy included in all major intergovernmental decisions of the United Nations and international and regional organizations and forums. We request the Secretary-General to do that, and we strongly believe that this information, being very extensive, will promote solidarity among the democracies of the world.

To us in Bangladesh, democracy is a cardinal principle of governance. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina reiterated this when she spoke at the Security Council Summit in New York last September. Enhancing the democratic process has been a rewarding experience and exercise in our nation-building endeavour.

In Bangladesh, institutions and laws have been put in place and strengthened to reinforce democracy and promote good governance with a view to promoting social cohesion and integration and ensuring the participation of the people. Bangladesh is seriously engaged in decentralization of power to the local bodies. Encouraging the participation of women has resulted in the election of as many as 14,000 women members to these local bodies. We have embarked on a comprehensive programme of reform and deregulation. The commitment of Bangladesh to democracy and the rule of law prompted us to accord priority to human rights. Bangladesh believes in the centrality of the right to development within the human rights regime.

Social development has remained the main focus of our development strategy. Education, health care and women's empowerment within the broad framework of human development continue to receive priority attention. The rights of women and children are focused upon. The role and involvement of civil society in our development and democratization efforts, particularly in the social sector, have been very extensive.

We strongly recommend that the world body improve the capacity of the Organization to respond effectively to the request of Member States for support for their democratization efforts. While doing so, we also recognize the responsibility of each country in ensuring peace, justice, equality, human rights, individual freedom, rule of law, pluralism, development and better standards of living.

In this respect, we must bear in mind that democracy is based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and on their full participation in all aspects of their lives. We must recognize the essential values of democracy, such as free and transparent elections, development and peace, and see to it that they are not undermined in any way.

In this context, we would like to draw attention to the final Warsaw Declaration entitled "Towards a Community of Democracies", which was adopted last June by an international conference in Poland of more than 100 countries. Bangladesh made its humble contribution to its consensus adoption. I would like to quote a part of that Declaration:

> "We will seek to strengthen institutions and processes of democracy. We appreciate the value of exchanging experience in the consolidation of democracy and identifying best practices. We will promote discussions and, where appropriate, create forums on subjects relevant to democratic governance for the purpose of continuing and deepening our dialogue on democratization. We would focus our deliberations on our common principles and values rather than extraneous bilateral issues between members. We resolve jointly to cooperate to discourage and resist the threat to democracy posed by the overthrow of constitutionally elected governments."

My delegation is happy to note that the follow-up process to the implementation of the recommendations adopted in Bucharest has produced such good results as Web site and database inventories and the democracy forum.

We are also happy to note that preparations are well advanced for the Fourth International Conference, which is to be held in Benin from 4 to 6 December.

Bangladesh will be represented at the Cotonou Conference by our Foreign Minister. We understand that Secretary-General Kofi Annan will attend the Conference and that he is expected to make a major policy statement on the role of the United Nations in democratization in the twenty-first century. My delegation commends the Secretary-General for his initiative and looks forward to his statement in Cotonou.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/55/L.32/Rev.1. I should like to announce that since its publication, Ireland has become a sponsor of draft resolution A/55/L.32/Rev.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.32/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/55/L.32/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 55/43).

The President: I call on the representative of Poland, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Stańczyk (Poland): I have taken the floor on behalf of the members of the Convening Group of the Community of Democracies, namely, Chile, the Czech Republic, India, Mali, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the United States of America and my own country, Poland, to welcome the adoption of the resolution entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". The Convening Group notes with satisfaction that this resolution has been adopted by consensus, and thus the entire membership of the United Nations has spoken resolutely with one voice on the issue of democracy, which is a matter of utmost importance not only for the States on whose behalf I am speaking, but for the international community at large.

The world leaders who gathered here at the United Nations on the occasion of the Millennium Summit committed themselves to promoting democracy by strengthening the capacity of their countries to implement the principles and practices of democracy. That crystal-clear commitment is already being implemented. On 4 December at Cotonou, Benin, the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies will open its deliberations. The Convening Group of the Community of Democracies strongly appeals to all Member States to be represented at that Conference at the highest possible level and to participate actively in it. I can assure the Assembly that the eight States of the Convening Group, on whose behalf I am speaking, will respond to this appeal positively.

The Convening Group of the Community of Democracies once again underlines its strong interest in promoting democracy and democratization in the world. We deeply believe that our approach and determination will stimulate and facilitate the efforts of other Governments, as well as those of international organizations, to intensify their national and international action to strengthen the rule of law, further develop and enhance democratic institutions and mechanisms and strongly stand by democratic ideals.

The President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 39?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 20 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/55/82, A/55/494, A/55/637)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.38)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/55/90, A/55/92, A/55/123, A/55/124, A/55/125, A/55/212, A/55/317, A/55/319, A/55/333, A/55/347, A/55/415, A/55/416, A/55/418, A/55/620)

Draft resolutions (A/55/L.16, A/55/L.35, A/55/L.36 and A/55/L.41)

(c) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/55/137)

The President: I should like to inform members that sub-item (d), entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan", will be considered with agenda item 46 at a later date.

I should also like to inform Members that, in a letter dated 6 October 2000 addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the group of Western European and other States for the month of October, requests that the General Assembly hear in plenary meeting a statement by the observer of Switzerland in the debate on sub-item (a) of agenda item 20, "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

Taking into account the importance attached to the issue under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly should take a decision on that request.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear a statement by the observer of Switzerland in the debate on agenda item 20 and its sub-items (a) to (c)?

It was so decided.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Tajikistan to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.41.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Tajikistan takes a positive view of the report of the United Nations Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations", as contained in document A/55/82. On the whole, this document gives a clear and comprehensive picture of the work of the United Nations in the humanitarian field. We note a marked improvement in the quality of the document, as compared with last year's report. This pertains in particular to the larger amount of information, the depth of analysis, as well as the presentation of specific recommendations on the problems.

Tajikistan attaches great importance to the work of the United Nations in extending extraordinary humanitarian assistance, which is making a tangible contribution to overcoming the consequences of natural disasters, man-made disasters, and other emergency situations and is contributing to the stabilization of the situation in various crisis points of the world.

As concerns international humanitarian assistance, I would like to emphasize the importance of observing its fundamental principles — that is, neutrality, a humane approach, impartiality and the lack of any political conditions, respect for sovereignty and the territorial integrity of States. Humanitarian assistance must, of course, be given with the consent of the country that has suffered the disaster and in accordance with international law and national legislation.

Tajikistan attaches great importance to the concept of humanitarian limits on sanctions. We consider that, in determining any sanctions regime, one must be guided by clear-cut criteria and take account of the consequences, both for the population of the country undergoing the sanctions and for that of third countries. We believe that there is need for a humanitarian approach to sanctions and that they need to be properly targeted. International humanitarian organizations ought to be exempted from the effects of sanction limitations. Sanctions should not be applied to foodstuff supplies, medicines, or other emergency supplies to the civilian population. In our view, it is also important to protect particularly vulnerable groups of the population from the consequences of sanctions.

Looking at last year's report by the Economic and Social Council on this subject, we think there are grounds for certain optimism in this area. Furthermore, we think it is important to continue work on rendering sanction regimes more humanitarian.

We attach great importance to strengthening the coordination machinery and instruments in the field of humanitarian assistance. This applies, first and foremost, to the work of the Inter-Agency Standing

Committee and the consolidated inter-agency appeals. We note an improvement in the procedure for preparing appeals and the usefulness of publishing them all at the same time. We hope that the new consolidated United Nations appeal for 2001 to be issued tomorrow, will be successful and will meet with a positive reaction on the part of the donor community.

While agreeing with what the report says about the importance of strengthening multilateral humanitarian assistance, we consider that it should not compete with bilateral assistance. Multilateral and bilateral assistance, along with the contribution of the humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), need to be part of a single whole, and, to the extent possible, should be taken into account in this context in inter-agency appeals in order to get the fullest possible picture of assistance.

We share the concern voiced in the report about the low level — about 27 per cent — of coverage of the financial needs presented in the inter-agency appeals for the year 2000. Clearly, additional efforts are needed in order to mobilize financing; that would include also the so-called "forgotten" emergency situations.

The increase in the incidence of natural and other disasters in recent years, and the consequent increase in the scale of human and material losses, have placed new demands on the international community in this sphere. One priority area for the development of such cooperation, in our view, is the effective utilization of the most advanced and highly specialized technologies for dealing with catastrophes. We take a positive view of the section of the report dealing with the role played by technology. It is our view that this is a step in the right direction. However, one must note that this section of the report is mainly devoted to computerization, telecommunications and space technologies, which are involved at the early-warning and disaster prevention stages. Almost no information or analysis is provided relating to the use of technology for bringing help or rescue when actually dealing with the consequences of a disaster.

It is important to intensify the efforts of the United Nations to strengthen the international capacity to react to disasters, with emphasis on the utilization of the most advanced specialized technologies in carrying out rescue operations and in work to clear up the aftermath of natural disasters. We believe that this could be facilitated by preparing a comprehensive inventory of the available technological capacity at the national, regional and international levels, as well as recommendations for making fuller use thereof.

We greatly appreciate the work of the United Nations to extend humanitarian assistance to all countries that need it — without exception — whether as a result of complex emergency situations, natural disasters or man-made disasters.

On behalf of the sponsors, including Bangladesh, India, the Republic of Korea and Japan, the delegation of Tajikistan has the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation of Tajikistan". The consideration and adoption by the General Assembly of this resolution testifies to the real support given by the international community to post-conflict peace-building in Tajikistan.

The continuation of the United Nations humanitarian programmes in my country will help to supplement the efforts of my Government to consolidate the peace process and will have a substantial effect in strengthening the favourable conditions that are now emerging for economic recovery and for sustained development.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for elaborating the recent 2000 consolidated inter-agency appeal for humanitarian assistance.

The draft resolution now before us, among other things, welcomes the implementation of the main provisions of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan. It expresses appreciation for the important role played by the United Nations in the peace process; expresses appreciation to all States and international organizations for their contribution to the successful implementation of the General Agreement; notes that the humanitarian situation, despite the conclusion of the peace process, remains difficult because of the unstable economic situation and the serious drought which, for the first time in the last 100 years, has afflicted Tajikistan.

The draft resolution goes on to emphasize the importance of continuing humanitarian assistance as a key factor in consolidating the peace process in Tajikistan. It welcomes the establishment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Tajikistan Office for Peace-building, calls on the Secretary-

General to continue to monitor the humanitarian situation in Tajikistan and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session.

We express our sincere gratitude to all 45 Member States that have already become sponsors of this draft and all delegations that took part in drafting this text under the wise guidance of the Ambassador of Luxembourg, Mr. Hubert Wurth, for whose coordination efforts we are grateful.

The delegation of Tajikistan hopes that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

The President: I call on the representative of Kazakhstan to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.16.

Ms. Jarbussynova (Kazakhstan): I should like to take this opportunity to introduce the draft resolution entitled "International cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan", which is contained in document A/55/L.16.

I should like to announce that, since its publication, the following countries have also become sponsors of this draft: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Iceland, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Netherlands and Poland.

As noted in the draft, the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground, inherited by Kazakhstan and closed in 1991, remains a matter of serious concern for the people and Government of Kazakhstan with regard to its consequences for the lives and health of the people, especially children and other vulnerable groups, as well as for the environment of the region.

It stresses the need for continuing international attention and extra efforts in solving problems with regard to the Semipalatinsk region and its population. The draft also recognizes the need to coordinate national and international efforts aimed at the rehabilitation of the health of the affected population and the environment in this region, as well as the need for know-how in minimizing and mitigating these serious problems.

The Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan initiated General Assembly resolution 52/169 M of 16 December 1997, which invited the international community to contribute to the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region, and requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report in order to assist the Government in the formulation of an overall action plan.

In order to implement that resolution, in June 1998 a joint needs assessment mission was deployed, which prepared an integrated programme framework consisting of 38 priority projects in the areas of health, humanitarian aid, ecology, economy and information dissemination.

My Government is especially grateful to the World Bank, the Government of Japan and the United Kingdom and to the General Board of Global Ministries, the United States non-governmental organization, for their fruitful cooperation with Kazakhstan and encouraging support in the realization of the priority projects.

At present, the situation in the region remains complicated. The report of the Secretary-General under agenda item 20 (b) states that due to the longer-term effects of radiation, as well as the consequences of nuclear explosions, the population remains extremely vulnerable and is not in a position to meet the economic, social and ecological challenges of the ongoing transition process.

Independent experts from Japan carried out a radiological evaluation of the Semipalatinsk former nuclear-test site, and arrived at the conclusion that the present level of radiation there is 600 times above normal and is equal to that in Hiroshima after the nuclear bombing. The current situation in this region remains a matter of great concern to my Government, which is seeking moral support from the international community.

Since the adoption of the General Assembly resolutions, the international community has devoted considerable attention to the situation in the region. The Government of Kazakhstan and the United Nations country team, headed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) resident coordinator in Kazakhstan, have jointly initiated a series of consultations with the country's main international partners.

As a result of this fruitful cooperation and with the assistance of the Government of Japan, an international conference was convened in Tokyo in

September 1999. That event raised the awareness of the international community of the current situation in the region and appealed to the countries and the United Nations system for further assistance. We are grateful to the Japanese Government for organizing this conference, which was extremely important in supporting the rehabilitation of the Semipalatinsk region.

My Government is doing its utmost to stabilize the situation in the region, which is extremely difficult because of the consequences of the transitional period. That is why we would like the international community to share its knowledge and experience in order to contribute to the human, economic and ecological rehabilitation of the Semipalatinsk region.

In conclusion, I should like to express our deep thanks to the sponsoring countries and to other Member States for extending their full support to this draft resolution. We hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): Both natural and man-made disasters continue to cause pain and suffering, whereas the resources to alleviate their consequences fall short of what is needed.

Although emergency relief after natural disasters is essential, preparedness is also crucial. International assistance is key in this regard and certainly makes a difference in mitigating damage and reducing the need for post-disaster aid and reconstruction.

If prevention plays an important part in the area of natural disasters, it has an even greater role when it comes to the so-called complex emergencies, which can be defined as situations in which human beings have their dignity abased on a large scale as a result of conflict.

Prevention has to do with the construction of solid pillars for a peaceful society through cooperation for development, poverty eradication and the strengthening of the rule of law.

Let me highlight three aspects of the United Nations humanitarian assistance that we deem essential.

The first relates to coordination. The many different humanitarian agencies must work together in a coordinated effort to provide aid. Their coordination efforts must be based on the principle of shared responsibility. Their mandates can differ in nature, but the work of all humanitarian and development agencies, as well as the main United Nations organs, are intertwined, since the overriding goal is indivisible: the full enjoyment of basic human rights. We therefore attach great importance to the contribution that can be made by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in their respective spheres of competence with a view to producing a synergy in the realm of humanitarian assistance.

The second aspect is related to the access of humanitarian personnel to those who need assistance. In several situations of armed conflict, the deliberate denial of access is a powerful weapon against the civilian population, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. In other cases, the denial of access is used as a way to shroud breaches of international human rights law and refugee law. Although States are responsible for providing assistance to their population, they must take into account their international obligations and facilitate the work of humanitarian personnel. States have the duty to ensure that their population receives the necessary humanitarian assistance and has the possibility to enjoy its human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The third aspect I would like to mention is the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. We are aware that the difficulty of providing aid to those in need is mounting due to a vast array of factors. One obstacle in the way of assistance stems from the very nature of most of today's conflicts. In internal conflicts, the difference between combatants and civilians is often blurred, with tragic consequences. In this context, assistance is an important asset and is in many instances unfortunately diverted by belligerents.

Needless to say, humanitarian workers bear the brunt of this sort of action. They are increasingly targeted and become victims of either deliberate or random violence. The number of 198 civilian staff killed in the service of the United Nations since 1992 is a shocking one, and yet it does not reflect the real situation on the ground. Many non-United Nations humanitarian workers were also targeted in the same period.

The report of the Secretary-General on this issue puts forward various recommendations to strengthen the United Nations security management system. We

must act promptly and provide the Secretary-General with the adequate support to change the current untenable situation. As pointed out by the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, in her briefing to the Security Council early this month, no matter how rapidly and effectively humanitarian agencies mobilize, their response will be inadequate unless the environment in which they operate is secure.

Apart from providing United Nations staff and humanitarian personnel with adequate training, equipment and counselling, we should keep in mind the need to improve the whole security environment for humanitarian assistance. In this regard, Mrs. Ogata stressed some measures to be implemented with the cooperation of host Governments, such as assisting the judiciary, training the local police and the military, supporting the police with logistics and communication and deploying liaison officers to work as coordinators and advisors.

Gross violations of human rights and humanitarian and refugee law are at the centre of today's complex emergencies. It is important, therefore, to strengthen the advocacy efforts of the United Nations system and to exert pressure, whenever necessary, to halt such abuses and to ensure that those responsible are held accountable for their crimes. It is also fundamental that adequate legal protection be provided to everyone working in the field to alleviate the plight of the needy. It is time to launch a process with a view to widening the scope of protection under the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

Allow me to render homage to all those who have paid the ultimate price while trying to provide some hope for the underprivileged of the world. They are heroes, but not in the sense of being endowed with an extraordinary or inexplicable ability for sacrifice. They are the heroes of real life, citizens who believe in solidarity as a driving force in the search for durable solutions for the plagues that haunt humanity.

We must set aside the pious speeches, roll up our sleeves and get into the real business of taking concrete measures so as to give solidarity a chance. The fact that today's heroes are common people is the guarantee that we do not need extraordinary or godlike powers to do what must be done. What we need is just the political will to translate solidarity and compassion into comprehensive measures to change the grim reality that prevails in many parts of the world.

Mr. Heinbecker (Canada) (*spoke in French*): It has been two years since my delegation last spoke in this Hall on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. Since then, the world has been shaken by successive crises that have frequently made contradictory demands on the limited resources available and have sorely tested our ability to cope with such situations.

Our capacity to react effectively to these situations is of vital importance, since it has a direct and tangible effect on the lives and deaths of millions of people in need. Let us consider, for instance, the violence in East Timor, Sierra Leone, Eritrea and Ethiopia, Angola, Afghanistan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kosovo, Colombia and the Sudan; the hurricanes in Central America; the floods in Venezuela, Bangladesh and Mozambique; the drought in the Horn of Africa and large parts of Asia; and the earthquakes in Turkey and Greece. I have cited here only those crises that have dominated the headlines. It is in such terrible conditions that people frequently have their first contact with the United Nations.

At the Millennium Summit this fall, our leaders committed themselves to extending and strengthening protection for civilians in armed conflict and other complex emergency situations. We should give priority attention to meeting these objectives.

(*spoke in English*)

Last September, the Secretary-General, in a report to the Security Council subsequently transmitted to the General Assembly, made 40 recommendations for protecting civilians in armed conflict. The Security Council has identified strategies for those aspects of that report within its mandate. Security Council action is necessary, but not sufficient, if we are going to be truly successful in protecting war-affected civilians. We need the full, active and innovative engagement of this Assembly. Above all, we in this Hall need to address ourselves to the underlying causes of conflict and to help create conditions for sustainable peace and reconciliation. Humanitarian action is often independent of political engagement, but it is never an effective substitute for it.

How can the General Assembly help? The Assembly can promote human rights law, encourage respect for humanitarian law and principles and end impunity. We are already grappling with many of the most pressing questions affecting civilians: forced displacement, the impacts of conflict on children and women, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, humanitarian assistance and access, food security, good governance and democracy and sustainable development. We call on the bodies of the Assembly to integrate the Secretary-General's recommendations into their own work and to promote practical strategies for implementation at the field level.

The Secretary-General is mandated to report again in the spring on the protection of civilians to the Assembly and to the Security Council. For Canada's part, we will continue to actively promote this dimension of our human security agenda here and throughout the Organization.

It is perhaps not surprising that as civilians increasingly become targets in contemporary conflicts, those providing protection and assistance to them are also likely to find themselves under attack. In instances of armed conflict, their efforts are often seen by combatants as obstacles or as biased. The Secretary-General has eloquently noted that, regrettably, working under a United Nations flag or the Red Cross or the Red Crescent is no longer a guarantee of protection. The stark evidence is the deaths of 198 United Nations civilian staff members since 1992 — 25 this year alone. These colleagues died in the service of all of us in this room.

Collectively, this Assembly has expressed its profound concern about security incidents involving personnel of the United Nations system and other humanitarian personnel. If we continue to ask humanitarian workers to operate in dangerous environments on our behalf, we simply must do more to protect them. It is incumbent on us to follow up concretely on the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report. We need to give our people the proper training, provide them with enhanced United Nations security resources and ensure that assaults or physical violence are investigated and prosecuted.

Canada likewise supports the inclusion of security measures in the United Nations consolidated appeals. We need also to consider carefully the Secretary-General's recommendations with regard to the scope of legal protection under the 1994 Convention. Most United Nations humanitarian action is carried out in the absence of international peace support operations. For such operations, the 1994 Convention is applicable only if the General Assembly or the Security Council declares that an exceptional risk to United Nations and associated personnel exists. It is vital, therefore, that the Assembly take greater responsibility for monitoring situations on the ground and, where conditions merit, for acting promptly to invoke the 1994 Convention. Moreover, we urge all States that have not yet done so to sign the International Criminal Court Statute before 31 December and to proceed expeditiously to ratify and fully implement its provisions. The International Criminal Court will deter potential perpetrators.

We also call on States to apply the principles contained in the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The safety of the people who work on our behalf should have no political boundaries. The United Nations, to its great credit, is responding to these most serious challenges to our common humanity. Canada welcomes the progress that has been made by the United Nations system in developing more coordinated and integrated approaches to both complex emergencies and natural disasters.

We support, in particular, current efforts to improve the surge capacity, to set minimum standards for humanitarian operations and to systematize arrangements for coordination, including further strengthening the Consolidated Appeals Process. We congratulate the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). We encourage them to redouble their efforts to improve collaboration with the humanitarian community.

I would like to take this opportunity to express Canada's appreciation for the work of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Carolyn McAskie, who has dealt with multiple crises adroitly and adapted the institution to the dynamic needs of the international community, including through the management review that she conducted of OCHA. The job that she and other senior women are successfully doing here is clear evidence of the benefit of hiring and promoting competent women in this Organization.

In order to ensure that humanitarian action can be most effective and have maximum impact, we urge OCHA and its partners to strive for an even more coherent approach with political, human rights and development partners. In this regard we underscore the relevance of the Brahimi report. In order to ensure coherence among the various bodies of the United Nations system, we need to promote a sense of partnership among the General Assembly, the Secretary Council and the Economic and Social Council. The artificial boundaries between these United Nations bodies inhibit our ability to help those who need that help most.

If coherence is important within the United Nations — and it is — it is no less important among Member countries. Indeed, I believe that I am safe in saying that States are not always consistent in their interaction with United Nations bodies. Here we need to try to get our own houses in order. We must also ensure that we keep the needs of vulnerable populations very much in mind in our deliberations. In this regard, let me register my Government's regret that we were unable to reach substantive conclusions at this summer's humanitarian segment of the Economic and Social Council, particularly on issues of such great importance as humanitarian access, disaster response and internal displacement. As far as we are concerned, this failure in no way diminished the conclusions that had been reached previously by consensus in other bodies, nor should it be seen as an opportunity to roll back agreed language or inhibit further work. We look forward to this year's humanitarian segment and the opportunity to do better.

(*spoke in French*)

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that my delegation is pleased with the progress that has been achieved so far to improve the overall effectiveness and coordination of humanitarian assistance in disaster or complex emergency situations. The Secretary-General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator have our full support to proceed with the necessary reforms. To successfully overcome the current humanitarian challenges, we will have to be innovative, flexible and dynamic in our approach.

Ms. López (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela appreciates the efforts of the United Nations and welcomes the creation of the new mechanism, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, which reflects the achievements of the mandate of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. We recognize that with this mechanism we have a combination of prevention and assistance to vulnerable countries.

We support this effort that has been successful in bringing together the specialized agencies of the United Nations the Inter-Agency Task Force that designed the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, which is a strategy for a safer world in the twenty-first century. We hope its implementation will reduce the effects of natural disasters.

Mr. Shihab (Maldives), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The impact and recurrence of disasters deeply affects developing countries and consequently delays the integration of their economies into the world economy. Natural disasters not only cause the most regrettable losses of human life; they also damage infrastructures, particularly basic and service sectors, often destroying the main source of income and delay economic progress for a long time.

Venezuela expresses its appreciation to the international community and to governmental and non-governmental organizations for the support it received as a result of the tragedy that took our country by surprise on 17 December 1999, as reflected in resolution 54/96 K, adopted at the fifty-fourth session. Solidarity with the Government and the people of Venezuela is expressed therein.

Since then, Venezuela has strengthened efforts aimed at improving our system for managing and handling disasters. A specialized working group has been formed, under the auspices of the Ministry of Science and Technology, aimed at designing strategies to address risk management from a scientific, multidisciplinary and comprehensive platform. Factors of social vulnerability are treated as one of the fundamental aspects to be evaluated in the appraisal and zoning of risks. Our efforts are also aimed at seeking scientific and technological alternatives that allow us to implement solutions in accordance with the country's particularities, with the participation of the affected communities.

We are working comprehensively to redirect risk management processes, with a focus on preventive measures and mitigation, without diminishing the

importance of emergency management, in which the relevant State institutions play a role. From another viewpoint, we are strengthening risk-related preventive measures at all levels of decision-making and participation. The great lesson of the natural disaster of December 1999 was that an atypical climatic variation can cause extensive damage, especially when there is no system for the whole territory and particularly when the river basins are not protected.

The national Government is working closely with the private sector in this recovery and planification process. However, all the phases of recovery and reconstruction of the affected regions have not been concluded. Today, the rains continue to cause floods throughout almost the entire country, in some cases with devastating effects. Because of this, the national Government has declared a state of emergency in 11 states, where the rains have left more than 2,400 families homeless.

Part of the challenge our countries face is access to technology. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in his message on International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction, on 11 October 2000, the methods and technologies are rarely used to help the most poor and vulnerable people, who constitute the silent majority of victims of disasters throughout the world.

Both prevention and response capability can be achieved efficiently and effectively if appropriate technology is available. Undoubtedly, it brings not only the distribution of financial resources, in some cases limited, but also the training of highly specialized human resources. In this regard, we call on the international community, particularly the countries with advanced technology for disaster prevention, to share their technology, and thus we will be able to avoid more misfortunes such as the one my country experienced.

In conclusion, we wish to express our appreciation to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for its assistance and attention to the basic needs of the most vulnerable groups, as well as for its support in the areas of food security, housing, education, health, water and sanitation.

Mr. Honningstad (Norway): Nine years ago the General Assembly initiated the discussion on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. Since then we have seen extraordinary efforts by the United Nations system in its drive towards enhanced coordination, at all levels, in the field as well as at Headquarters. Humanitarian emergencies are increasing in scale and in number. More resources are needed to react effectively. It simply costs more to contain more human suffering and deprivation. We do not respond accordingly. Our collective effort to fulfil our obligations in this respect is out of tune with the real needs. We urgently need to reverse this trend. Two efforts seem vital to this end: sustained adequate financial commitment from donors and further improved coordination on behalf of the United Nations.

Norway therefore welcomes the report of the Secretary-General. The topics discussed are highly relevant, as are its findings and recommendations, including the outlining of the challenges calling for further work.

The enlarged membership of the United Nations Interdepartmental Framework for Coordination Team is, we believe, a positive step towards better preventive action. We are convinced that this will strengthen the development of improved mechanisms for early warning, contingency planning and preparedness. The responsibility of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee as a focal point for humanitarian coordinators is paramount. Equally important are the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's policy paper on internally displaced persons and its decision on collaborative responsibility to ensure better protection and assistance to internally displaced persons.

The extensive attention to the work aimed at better coordination of assistance when natural disasters strike is both helpful and highly relevant. Moreover, highlighting the issue of civilians in armed conflict, the imperative of safe and unimpeded access to victims and inclusive attention to gender and child issues are also pertinent.

References to legal instruments, inter alia, the International Criminal Court and the 1994 Convention on the Safety of the United Nations and Associated Personnel, are rightly given focus in this report. The report's reference to decisions made in the Security Council on various issues related to the humanitarian field reminds us of the interrelation between humanitarian issues, conflict prevention, peacekeeping, rehabilitation and longer-term sustainable development.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has made decisions that have been crucial in moving the United Nations further ahead on a wide range of issues. Many of these have had a vital impact on core activities of the Organization. Another tangible result of the recommendations of Member States and various United Nations agencies — one that is timely to mention today — is the consolidated appeals process. Over the next few days, 19 such appeals will be launched in eight cities around the world, starting here in New York tomorrow. The needs identified amount to about $2 billion for next year. This is a staggering amount. Nonetheless, this figure represents emergency life-saving assistance to more than 35 million people. Thus, the amount required is still small compared to the human suffering that can and should be avoided by meeting the requirements of the appeals. It is worth reminding ourselves that the consolidated appeals have been developed to meet a request from the Member States for the United Nations to better coordinate its humanitarian assistance efforts. This will avoid duplication and waste of scarce resources.

Norway has responded generously in mobilizing resources for the consolidated appeals. This instrument is used both as a strategic tool and as the single most important channel for Norwegian contributions to emergency humanitarian assistance. Between a fourth and a third of the total funding available for emergency assistance is provided through the consolidated appeals. Norway welcomes the efforts that are being made to include gender-related issues, questions and costs related to the security of staff, and the challenges of internal displacement in these appeals.

Still, we are faced with a paradox. While more work and inter-agency coordination are being undertaken in order to improve the consolidated appeals and make them more user-friendly, the appeals have managed to mobilize less funds over the last few years. My delegation is deeply concerned by the fact that only 55 per cent of the consolidated appeal for 2000 has been funded as of mid-November. We are convinced that Governments could make more active use of the consolidated appeals when they allocate funds for emergency assistance.

The consolidated-appeal donor meeting held in Montreux in March this year was an important step towards achieving better dialogue between donor Governments and concerned United Nations agencies. We see this process as a two-way street and believe we should continue this kind of dialogue to further enhance the consolidated appeals both as a strategic tool and as a vehicle to secure better and more predictable donor response.

Important improvements in the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance have been made. But we could do more. The last nine years have been a learning process for everyone involved. The United Nations has come a long ways. Given the relentless work that is done within the humanitarian field, new and even better means of coordination will undoubtedly be established in the years to come. A particular challenge for both the United Nations and donor and recipient Governments is to better include the non-governmental organizations and local national organizations when coordinating the utilization of the scarce resources made available.

Non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to interact and play a constructive role with the United Nations coordination units at the field level. Recipient Governments must do everything in their power to facilitate emergency operations and help ensure that aid reaches those in need and that national and international humanitarian personnel can carry out their jobs in a safe environment.

Let me turn to a problem that increasingly hampers the ability of the United Nations and other humanitarian actors to provide assistance to people in need. As has been mentioned in the Secretary-General's report on the safety and security of United Nations personnel, the erosion of respect for international humanitarian law over the last years has led to the death of 198 civilian United Nations staff since 1992. The vicious, targeted and deadly attacks on staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in West Timor and Guinea recently underlines the blatant lack of respect for the security of humanitarian personnel. We appeal to all Government and non-government actors in armed conflicts to abide by international law by ensuring safe and unhindered access for the protection of and the provision of assistance to people in need.

While honouring the sacrifices of those who have given their life in the service of the United Nations, we must give a clear message that this situation is unacceptable and intolerable. There could be no better way of doing this than to act swiftly on the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's

report; to respond to the most immediate needs regarding strengthening the security and safety of United Nations system personnel, including the establishment of a full-time post of United Nations Security Coordinator; and to contribute to the security-related requirements defined in the consolidated appeals.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU). The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, align themselves with this statement.

It is essential to provide victims of complex emergencies and natural disasters with the assistance and relief they need. The European Union welcomes the work done by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to enhance the effectiveness and coordination of operations conducted in this context. The EU also welcomes OCHA's efforts to facilitate the transition from humanitarian emergency to reconstruction. The EU fully supports this Office and its many tasks and would like to give our assurance that we are available to continue discussions on the various aspects of coordination of humanitarian assistance.

Since the subject that we are discussing today is the coordination of humanitarian and disaster-relief assistance, allow me to call attention to the people who during the past year were victims of armed conflicts or natural disasters and to the humanitarian staff who provided them aid and protection — often under very difficult circumstances and sometimes even at the risk of their own lives. Humanitarian assistance and the security of humanitarian workers cannot be separated. In fact, if sufficient security is not provided, it is impossible to provide vulnerable people with the assistance to which they are entitled.

The European Union shares the concern of the Secretary-General and of humanitarian workers regarding the deterioration of the working conditions for humanitarian staff in many situations. The EU thanks the Secretary-General for the excellent report on the security and safety of staff. He provides a clear picture of the attacks on security that have occurred, of the current system, and of the measures that could be taken to improve staff security. He recalls that in one year 21 United Nations staff members have lost their lives and stresses the fact that the crimes committed against these persons have gone unpunished in almost every case.

The European Union believes that this is an intolerable situation. We are pleased that the Statute of the International Criminal Court has defined attacks on people employed in humanitarian missions as a crime. The EU urges all States to sign and ratify this legal instrument. The EU also invites States to include from now on in their own legislation the fundamental principles contained in the Statute of the International Criminal Court and to take the necessary steps to wage an effective battle against impunity with regard to these types of crimes.

The European Union also appeals to countries that have yet to sign and ratify the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. The EU is ready to examine recommendations by the Secretary-General on extending the scope of application of this Convention.

The European Union welcomes the efforts already made by the United Nations system, particularly those undertaken by the Security Coordinator, to resolve the problems in an appropriate manner. It notes with satisfaction that the agencies have developed effective cooperation in these areas, particularly through financing certain posts in the office of the Coordinator. It calls for this cooperation to be strengthened in the field so that teams responsible for security in risk situations are fully integrated into the United Nations contingent, thus improving their effectiveness.

Security issues have been discussed in depth within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in particular in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The European Union would like that Committee to continue its work, paying particular attention to the training needs of all humanitarian staff with regard to stress management and risk situations. We are pleased that the non-governmental organizations that are partners of the United Nations are participating actively in this work.

The European Union will give its full attention to the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report. It will focus in particular on all measures to strengthen the training of staff, particularly

people assigned for the first time to a difficult situation, so that they can better understand the risks involved and manage crisis situations. The European Union will also look into the financial aspects of the report. Security measures have a cost, and must be considered in the context of the regular budget so that adequate and predictable funds can be assigned.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has, over the past year, undertaken a major effort to focus on the situation of internally displaced persons, for whom the State concerned still bears primary responsibility. Such people should be able to benefit from the protection and assistance to which they are entitled, which is not always the case at present. That is why the European Union is pleased that inter-agency consultations have resulted in mutual arrangements by the agencies, within their respective mandates, to remedy the problem of insufficient coordination and enhance the effectiveness of action taken in support of internally displaced persons. We are confident that the general application of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, drafted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Deng, will be a key factor in this area. We also welcome the appointment of Mr. McNamara as special coordinator on internally displaced persons, and we are pleased that he has been able to begin his work in the field.

At its third humanitarian segment, which was held this year, the Economic and Social Council was unable, despite long negotiations, to arrive at agreed conclusions. This experience should lead us to reflect on the goals that we want to set for the humanitarian segment — whose recent establishment is linked to the reforms undertaken by the Secretary-General — and on its working methods, in particular the procedure for adopting agreed conclusions.

The European Union believes that the main purpose of the humanitarian segment is to allow countries to better understand humanitarian problems, demonstrate their common commitment to humanitarian principles and support the Secretary-General and his team in providing an effective response to and improved coordination during humanitarian crises. That is why the European Union would like the humanitarian segment to provide an opportunity for exchanges of views on the realities and difficulties of humanitarian coordination and to promote dialogue. We believe that, in order to facilitate such discussions, we should choose specific and constructive subjects.

The European Union encourages the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to continue working, together with the main organs of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, to raise awareness and provide information with regard to humanitarian situations. It also invites the Office to develop communication with all Member States, since all countries are involved in the activities of the Office, whether as beneficiaries and donors or because they participate directly in its operations.

The European Union also encourages the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to enhance its coordination with other sectors of the United Nations system and, in particular, to develop its proposal to work together with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Indeed, it is important to consider the possible consequences that the report of the Panel chaired by Mr. Brahimi might have on the coordination of humanitarian activities, as that report anticipates the implementation of integrated strategies within the framework of peacekeeping.

Through resolution 54/219, the General Assembly set out an international strategy for disaster reduction under the authority of the Emergency Relief Coordinator. Unfortunately, developments in recent years have shown that there is still a great deal to be done in this area and that, although all countries may be affected, regardless of their stage of development, it is clear that natural disasters increase the vulnerability of countries already facing economic difficulties.

Disaster reduction is an area in which international cooperation makes perfect sense, and we must try to strengthen such cooperation so as to increase the effectiveness of sustainable development and better protect natural resources, thus preventing human suffering. That is why it is important to continue activities undertaken in the context of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and to take advantage of the contacts that have been established with experts from different countries, maintaining close contact with the organizations that have replaced the national committees set up for the Decade.

The European Union believes that it is essential for the strategy to become part of the United Nations system so that we can ensure effective coordination among the various players concerned, primarily among

the competent agencies of the United Nations, but also in liaison with regional structures and qualified representatives of civil society. The Union noted that working groups on issues of major importance were set up during 2000. We hope that a new director will soon be appointed so that the strategy can be resolutely orientated towards action. Indeed, the international strategy is financed by voluntary contributions and only when something happens will donors mobilize themselves in support of the new structure.

The consolidated appeals procedure is an essential tool for the coordination of humanitarian operations and for defining complementary strategies, at the level of agency headquarters and at the field level. This process has considerable advantages: it enables agencies to define priorities and to ensure that their actions are part of a well-knit programme, particularly in the case of the transition between emergency humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and reconstruction. It offers donors an overall view of needs and the responses that can be made to those needs, thereby permitting them to give appropriate support to multilateral organizations. In this regard, the decision to distinguish between security considerations and the specific needs of displaced persons in these appeals will provide donors with important information. Finally, this process is also useful for non-governmental organizations as it will avoid any duplication of effort.

The European Union is pleased to see that growing importance is given to consolidated appeals and the occasion it offers to have an exchange of views and to encourage an expanded dialogue, particularly among beneficiary and donor countries. The Union is following with interest the new initiatives for decentralization of operations for launching consolidated appeals.

The coordination of activities and response capacity, frequently in emergency situations, requires stable staffing with people who are available and well trained, as well as adequate procedures. As the main contributor to the financing of humanitarian action, the European Union believes it is not satisfactory that the operation of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is, for the most part, not covered by the regular budget of the United Nations. The shortage of staff and financial resources have frequently meant that, when short- or long-term missions have to be carried out in the field, this Office is all too often unable to fully carry out these operations of coordination, analysis and information at Headquarters or in other countries. We would hope that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs could have a staff that would make it possible to perform these difficult missions better.

We would like to pay tribute to the Office and to all those who have been involved in this vital humanitarian work in the field. As Member States it is up to us to ensure the safety and security of this personnel. The European Union will this year, once again, be presenting a draft resolution on this subject.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Humanitarian assistance is one of the noblest expressions of the essential solidarity of the human spirit in the face of the challenges which, on a global scale, are presented to us by nature and by emergency situations created by the emergence and persistence of conflicts. It will always be better to prevent than to remedy. Development is, and will remain, the best deterrent to conflict and, at the same time, the best defence against the ravages of nature.

Today, when human society has the necessary resources for dealing with the most urgent needs of the population of the planet, the strengthening of international cooperation for development must be given the highest priority. This is an unavoidable challenge facing the United Nations.

By history and by conviction, Mexico has maintained that solutions to disputes must be in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Charter. Its principles cannot be made subject to interpretations dictated by momentary considerations.

Today there are no clear mandates, no definite consensus or universally accepted criteria for dealing with situations which have grave humanitarian consequences.

Mexico has firmly rejected the existence or the legitimation of a supposed right of interference, particularly when based on unilateral decisions or decisions by a small group of countries.

While the international community cannot, and must not, stand aloof from the tragedies and horrors of these humanitarian crises, action must be based on universally accepted principles and rules. A balance has to be found between the urgent need to respond

appropriately to humanitarian emergencies and the need to respect the sovereign integrity of States.

For this reason, Mexico has proposed to the President of the General Assembly that a process of consultations should be begun which will enable us to engage in collective reflection on this subject of crucial importance for States, for the world Organization and for the progressive development of international law.

Humanitarian assistance is a complex task that requires clear and definite parameters and, for that reason, Mexico supports the guiding principles laid down in resolution 46/182. That important resolution constitutes, at the same time, a plan of action and a standard of conduct for the deployment of international solidarity.

Humanitarian assistance must be provided in conformity with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. It is essential that it be granted within a framework of full respect for the sovereignty, the territorial integrity and the national unity of States, in conformity with the Charter and always in response to a request from, or with the consent of, the receiving State.

The safety of humanitarian workers is a central element in the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance. The most unstinting support for humanitarian personnel is essential. We extend our condolences to the families of those humanitarian workers who have lost their lives while doing their duty.

In recent years, on the global scale, there has been a significant increase in the impact of natural disasters in terms of the number of disasters and of those who have suffered, as well as the scale of the damage caused, with far-reaching social consequences and severe disruption to the economic development of the nations affected.

The Government of Mexico would like to reiterate its condolences and the expression of its solidarity to all countries that have had to face natural disasters, as well as its thanks to those peoples of the world who, in difficult moments, have extended their sympathy to the Mexican people.

The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and the international efforts we have undertaken to deal with the negative impacts of the El Niño meteorological phenomenon, cyclones, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes and mudslides — disasters that afflict every part of the world — have helped us forge a growing awareness and solidarity. The experience acquired by the international community has pointed to the urgent need of moving from a reactive approach to disasters to a comprehensive strategy, centred on sustainable global development, that places greater emphasis on the prevention and reduction of natural disasters. In that regard, Mexico and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have launched ongoing technical cooperation efforts at the regional level in every aspect of natural disasters, including prevention, early warning, emergencies, mitigation, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The United Nations is called upon to play a fundamental role in devising an integrated international strategy to cope with natural disasters that answers the what, how and who of international cooperation in dealing with natural disasters. It is in that belief that Mexico has for the second consecutive year co-sponsored the General Assembly's draft resolution on international cooperation for humanitarian assistance in natural disasters, from the emergency phase all the way through the work of reconstruction and development.

Humanitarian assistance is a shared responsibility and a collective commitment. In extending humanitarian assistance it is essential that the provisions of international law be combined with agreed frameworks of action and conduct, as well as with promoting and benefiting from solidarity among nations and peoples. This is, and will continue to be, the main thrust of Mexico's contribution to this objective of the United Nations.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): We thank the Secretary-General for the comprehensive and action-oriented reports he has provided us under this agenda item.

Over the last few years, the number of situations requiring humanitarian assistance has been on the rise. The mitigation of the humanitarian consequences of complex emergencies, natural disasters and other humanitarian crises requires sustained efforts by the international community. Fortunately, there has been a proliferation of actors trying to meet the needs of people affected by those emergencies; but the coordination challenge is growing. A key to the development of an effective response to these situations can be achieved through the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance

provided through various channels. The United Nations has the mandate and the capacity to meet the enormous challenges of coordinating humanitarian assistance. Its activities in such situations are guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, as expressed in General Assembly resolution 46/182, on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance.

The role of the United Nations becomes pivotal in complex humanitarian emergencies. Such situations generally require a comprehensive approach. One has to not only respond to the immediate needs of the victims of a humanitarian crisis, but also to address political and development aspects of the situation. They are always the root causes. A comprehensive approach to conflict situations is essential to address the root causes of conflict. The United Nations can perform those two roles. However, it needs to be ensured that the independence and impartiality of humanitarian activities is not compromised by their association with the political process.

The United Nations can also be more effective in ensuring civilian access to areas requiring humanitarian assistance and in ensuring the security of civilians. Efforts have been made by the United Nations system to work to strengthen both legal and physical protection for civilians caught up in situations of armed conflict. A range of options can be utilized, depending on the precise circumstances, to deal with various parties to a conflict to ensure the security of civilians.

However, it becomes extremely difficult when State machinery is used to kill innocent civilians in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation. Terrorism perpetrated by State troops, particularly against women and children, should not only be condemned, it should also be curbed and stern action should be taken. Those who violate the human rights of people living under foreign occupation should be brought to justice by the international community.

In the last decade, Africa has suffered enormously due to a number of complex humanitarian emergencies. However, the response of the international community has not been very supportive of Africa's efforts; nor have they been commensurate with the gravity of those situations. Bilateral actions have been very selective. In most cases, they have not been driven by the sole consideration of meeting the needs of the victims, but have been based on political considerations or exigencies. The needs of Africa must be met without attaching any strings to humanitarian assistance.

Unfortunately, there has been a considerable increase in the number of natural disasters occurring in various parts of the world. It is a well-known fact that the effects of such disasters can be considerably mitigated by early warning and rapid response. To develop these abilities, the developing countries must be provided access to relevant technologies and sufficient resources. The needs of small island developing States must be given special attention, as they are most vulnerable to natural disasters.

The emerging challenges in the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance in natural disasters and complex emergencies derive from the multiple sources and dimensions of civilian suffering, the growing number of actors involved in crisis response and the lack of sufficient resources to meet those challenges.

Although there has been an overall increase in the resources allocated for humanitarian assistance, the proportion of international humanitarian aid delivered through multilateral channels has declined from 45 per cent to about 25 per cent. The provision of resources through bilateral channels makes coordination of the international response more difficult. This also results in a loss of opportunities to develop the national capacities of affected countries, as most of the organizations tend to focus only on the delivery aspect of assistance and not on the long term question of development or addressing the root causes of the conflict situations.

The consolidated appeals process (CAP) provides the basic mechanism for the coordination of international responses to humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. CAP should be the overall framework for channelling humanitarian assistance from all sources. We urge the international community to channel its resources through multilateral assistance programmes.

The Secretary-General has made a useful proposal regarding the need to develop more innovative approaches in designing a CAP for the "forgotten emergencies," as the existing CAPs have failed to mobilize resources.

Pakistan is bearing an enormous burden stemming from an emergency that has been virtually

forgotten by the international community. We gave shelter more than a decade ago to over 4.5 million Afghan refugees, and today we are host to approximately 2.6 million Afghan refugees. We are being asked to keep our borders open so that we can receive more Afghan refugees. The Afghan people played a critical role in putting an end to the Cold War, but they have been denied a share in the peace dividend. We must all remember the sacrifices that the Afghan people made with their blood for the cause of the free world. Today they are being punished for those sacrifices in terms of unilateral sanctions that are being imposed on them. The world has abandoned this mass of displaced humanity. Consequently, the onus of responsibility for looking after the Afghan refugees has shifted to the Government of Pakistan. The limited resources of the Government have seriously curtailed its ability to address the needs of these refugees.

We call on the international community to respond to the appeals issued for humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees living in Pakistan and also to take note of the efforts being made to further punish the Afghan people by imposing unilateral actions. The world owes this to the proud and valiant Afghan people. If the Afghan people had not fought the last decisive battle of the cold war, perhaps the free world would not have been as free as it is today; neither would, perhaps, the Berlin Wall have collapsed.

It is imperative to take a long-term view of the problems of underdevelopment linked with conflicts, complex emergencies and the impact of natural disasters. Economic and social development can lead to the prevention of complex emergencies and to mitigation of the consequences of natural disasters. This holistic approach is likely to help in reducing the number of such emergencies.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Thank you for the opportunity that you have given us to address the General Assembly on this important issue.

We debate many issues of great importance during a General Assembly session. Few of these issues, though, have such a direct impact on the lives of millions of our fellow human beings as humanitarian assistance. Sadly, these millions now include our colleagues from the United Nations who have died in fulfilling their duties.

Article 1 of the Charter tells us that the United Nations is supposed to achieve international cooperation in order to solve international problems of a humanitarian character. I would dare to say that we, as Member States, have been able to achieve such cooperation with some measure of success. This is of little consolation, though, considering the fate that befalls many United Nations personnel tasked with implementing the agreements we reach. These staff members constantly face the prospect of being physically and psychologically harassed, violated and even murdered with impunity.

According to the Secretary General's report on this issue, 217 civilian staff members of the United Nations system have been killed in the line of duty since 1992. Worse yet, only three cases of violent death, out of 177, have been brought to justice. This situation is untenable and requires concrete action. As Member States, we need to acknowledge our obligations towards the safety and security of United Nations personnel in our countries. Where criminal or violent acts befall them, it is crucial that we ensure swift and effective action against the perpetrators.

The security and safety system for United Nations personnel also needs to be strengthened. My delegation fully supports the proposal of the Secretary-General in this regard and calls on other States to do the same.

My delegation is firmly of the opinion that we cannot expect United Nations staff members to take on difficult and dangerous assignments without proper training and equipment. This, of course, requires adequate and predictable funding, which, in our view, should come from the regular budget.

Earlier this year, Southern Africa, and particularly our neighbour Mozambique, suffered the most devastating floods in recorded history. South Africa and Zimbabwe were also not spared, but faced with huge damages and losses of our own, South Africa rendered what little assistance it could to our brothers and sisters.

What is heartwarming to us is the number of ordinary South African and Zimbabwean citizens who crossed the border to assist the people of Mozambique. Much of this would not have been possible or sustainable without the assistance of United Nations bodies such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance and the World Food Programme (WFP). Our gratitude goes out to them, especially the World Food Programme, whose

resources kept the rescue helicopters flying and helped save thousands of lives.

I also wish to express South Africa's appreciation to the donor community for the emergency assistance and the generous pledges made towards the reconstruction of Mozambique. Mozambique has made great strides in the past few years, which were beginning to be felt by ordinary citizens. It is important to sustain this momentum, and we strongly urge all donors to honour their pledges towards this end.

We need to learn from these and similar disasters in order to better prepare ourselves for future calamities. The southern African floods illustrated the value of using multilateral channels for emergency assistance. On the other hand, they highlighted the fact that relief agencies are acutely underfunded. While the donor community provided generously to the relief efforts in Mozambique, it took weeks to mobilize these resources. Rapid response, especially to disasters in developing countries, requires serious attention. The need for national disaster plans and management policies also became painfully evident.

All of this requires one thing, though: resources, provided through multilateral channels, to address these shortcomings in a coordinated and focused manner.

Allow me to briefly turn to the thorny issue of internally displaced persons. This year's humanitarian segment of the Economic and Social Council addressed this issue in part, and, as the Assembly is aware, failed to come up with any agreed conclusions. My delegation found this turn of events particularly disconcerting.

The issue of internally displaced persons is of major concern to the African region. Ten African countries alone account for over 12 million of the estimated 20 to 25 million people displaced in the world today. The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has displaced some 1.3 million of its citizens and caused similar displacements in neighbouring countries.

This issue requires our urgent attention and should be thoroughly considered by Member States. We cannot continue to be satisfied with piecemeal approaches on internal displacement while millions of people in Africa and elsewhere suffer. We call on all Member States to cast aside ideological inflexibilities and commit themselves to a serious debate on this issue.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): We are considering this important item against the backdrop of humanitarian emergencies which have exceeded by far our worst expectations. We are all aware of the natural and man-made disasters and emergencies of the past year. The Secretary-General's report (A/55/82) lists some of these major tragic events. What is even more disturbing is the fact that many of those disasters occurred in the poorest regions of the world, where people earn a living under very difficult circumstances. Naturally, they have a very limited capacity to recover from these disasters.

Developments in the area of humanitarian assistance, amid an increase in the need for it, have been mixed. Although there have been some encouraging signs of progress and a greater responsiveness on the part of the international community to come forward with increased assistance, the pace has not been sustained.

The Secretary-General's report contains a number of important observations and recommendations. I will focus on a few points today.

The President returned to the Chair

First, concerning coordination, with the increase in the number of humanitarian emergencies, the number and range of organizations that are becoming involved in humanitarian response to crises are also increasing. The needs of people affected by these emergencies are increasing, too. This is giving rise to coordination challenges for an effective response to the emergencies. Greater coordination between and among those organizations is therefore a priority.

Second, the consolidated appeals process is a key tool for coordinating the international response to emergencies. Greater emphasis should be placed on this process as a continuous, year-round process of inter-agency coordination. Key components should include joint assessments, monitoring and results-based evaluation. There should also be an increased involvement of non-governmental organizations in the strategy-setting process. We believe strongly that there is a need to mainstream gender in consolidated appeals and to include gender and child-related concerns in all appeals in 2001.

Third, it had been hoped that there would be a good response to the consolidated appeal in 1999, and, indeed, some 75 per cent of the requirements were provided for. Every effort should be made to maintain the upturn in donor response. It is somewhat disquieting that by May 2000, only a quarter of this year's consolidated appeal had been responded to. By November, that number had risen to only 50 per cent. The world should increase its responsiveness to humanitarian emergencies so as not to lose the impetus behind the response already achieved. In addition, appeals that received a low response in the past year, such as in the Congo, Somalia and Tajikistan, should be given higher priority.

Fourth, we place strong emphasis on ensuring the safety of personnel who are risking their lives to help people in distress. It is important for all to ensure that humanitarian personnel have safe and unimpeded access to all people in need of assistance. We are happy that a draft resolution to that effect is being articulated now for presentation to the General Assembly.

Fifth, the role of technology in disaster preparedness and in alerting people to an impending natural disaster cannot be overemphasized. The best way to minimize the loss of human lives and to reduce the impact of a disaster is to give people sufficient warning of an impending crisis. In Bangladesh, early warning and disaster preparedness have already made a great deal of difference in the way we tackle natural calamities, particularly cyclones. We urge all donor countries and international agencies to assist the Government in preparing and upgrading its technological capacity to prevent, mitigate and mount adequate response to disasters.

We feel that the relevant United Nations agencies and departments should also strengthen their existing early warning, preventive and preparedness mechanisms. In many countries, greater engagement and active participation of United Nations country teams is of great importance in assisting disaster-prone peoples.

Sixth, the role of modern communication technologies in reaching out to people living in remote areas cannot be overestimated. There should be a close collaboration and a sharing of experiences among the Governments of disaster-prone countries, humanitarian agencies and the private sector, which are at the forefront of the information and communication technology revolution. Such partnerships have great potential for mitigating disasters.

Seventh, with respect to internally displaced persons, national Governments and local authorities should ensure their adequate protection and assistance. Necessary cooperation should be extended by all authorities to provide access to agencies of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee so that they may bring help to affected people. It should be borne in mind that the needs and requirements of internally displaced persons and their situations are similar to those of refugees and such persons should be eligible for the same degree of protection and assistance.

In recent years, there has been an extraordinary demand on the multilateral agencies in addressing humanitarian and complex emergencies. They are being called upon more often than ever before to address an increasing number of conditions. Obviously, their capacity to address these situations must also be strengthened. It is, however, noted that there has been an increase in the channelling of aid through bilateral means and a steady erosion of flows through multilateral mechanisms. Bilateral aid, of course, is an essential and vital component of international humanitarian response, but it should never erode the strength or be at the expense of multilateral mechanisms. We urge the donor countries to strengthen the capacity and role of the partner organizations of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee so that they can effectively and promptly deliver required assistance to people in need.

Mr. Kobayashi (Japan): As the international community embarks on a new century, it must face the sad reality that, around the world, an increasing number of its people exist in extremely vulnerable situations, enduring a wide range of threats to their lives and dignity. Last September, at the historic Millennium Summit, heads of State and Government gathered to reflect on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. In their Millennium Declaration adopted at the conclusion of the Summit, these leaders underscored the crucial importance to the United Nations of strengthening efforts to protect the vulnerable.

Japan totally agrees that, in our efforts to realize a world where all people are free from want and fear, humanitarian assistance to those who are in greatest need in our community deserves greater attention. In

our view, in responding to the increasingly complex situation in which humanitarian assistance must be provided, it is of paramount importance that we redouble our efforts to make that assistance more effective and timely. To that end, Japan would like to stress in particular the need to strengthen the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and to reinforce the coordination of humanitarian assistance provided by different actors.

It goes without saying that effective humanitarian activities are possible only in an environment where humanitarian personnel can discharge their responsibilities without hindrance to their activities or fear for their lives. However, at the very moment that the heads of State and Government started their deliberations at the Millennium Summit on the importance of protecting the vulnerable, three United Nations staff members lost their lives in West Timor while carrying out their noble mission. For their sake and for other personnel who have sacrificed for a good cause, we must strengthen the arrangements relating to the safety and security of United Nations personnel. In this context, Japan welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the safety and security of United Nations personnel. Japan deems the report extremely useful, as it sheds light on the increasing threats to United Nations personnel, analyses existing safety and security arrangements and suggests measures that would improve them.

Japan strongly supports the initiative of the Secretary-General to strengthen our efforts to improve arrangements relating to the safety, security and protection of United Nations personnel. In our view, for these efforts to succeed, the following three points should be taken into consideration.

First, improving these arrangements should be given the highest priority. Japan has high regard for the initiative and approach of the Secretary-General, who has suggested both transitional measures to meet the most immediate needs and long-term measures that will require more detailed examination. As his report shows us, ensuring the safety and security of personnel from different organizations on the ground in a complex and rapidly changing context is a challenging task. The effectiveness of safety and security arrangements should be examined carefully but with a sense of urgency.

Secondly, as the report emphasizes, efficient and adequate training is a key factor in ensuring the safety and security of personnel. Last year, Japan contributed $1 million to the trust fund that was created to strengthen the security training of field personnel and will contribute another $1 million this year to enhance the security of field personnel. Japan hopes that other countries will join in this effort and that the United Nations will make the best use of it.

Thirdly, Japan would like to point out the importance of a legal framework for the security of humanitarian personnel. We reiterate our belief that the primary responsibility for ensuring a secure environment for humanitarian workers lies with the host country's Government. Japan, as one of the original State parties to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, urges all countries that have not yet become parties to the Convention to do so as soon as possible. Also, in order to make the provisions of this Convention applicable to humanitarian operations even before a protocol is developed to cover such personnel, Japan would like to propose that the General Assembly or Security Council routinely make declarations regarding operations to be covered when there is any reasonable concern about the degree of risk, taking into account the appropriate recommendations of the United Nations Security Coordinator.

Now I would like to turn to another important point related to ensuring the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance: the need to further strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance. Japan welcomes the efforts and progress made in this field in East Timor and Kosovo, for example, which are noted in the report of the Secretary-General on this theme, and commends the efforts and the work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs made in this regard, including the launching of a consolidated appeal, which deserves greater attention from the international community.

The need to coordinate the work of humanitarian and emergency relief assistance is all the greater in the light of the increasing number of actors involved, including United Nations organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, as well as in the light of the growing complexity of the situations and differentiated needs of victims. Furthermore, in addition to the need for horizontal coordination, or synergy, between actors on the ground,

the coordination necessary for realizing a smooth continuum between humanitarian emergency assistance and assistance for reconstruction is also crucial. Japan supports the initiatives and efforts for the enhancement of coordination launched by competent United Nations organizations and other important actors and encourages them to make further efforts so that concrete results will be produced on the ground.

At the dawn of a new century, we should reaffirm our commitment to build a society in which the rights of the most vulnerable members of society are protected and in which every person can enjoy a life that is free from fear and want. In this belief, at the Millennium Summit Prime Minister Mori of Japan emphasized the importance of promoting human security by addressing the wide range of threats to the life and dignity of human beings in the twenty-first century. Japan has thus made support for the most vulnerable within the international community one of the central pillars of its international cooperation. From this point of view, Japan is determined to continue to strongly support assistance to vulnerable people everywhere and to contribute to the further strengthening of coordination of humanitarian assistance.

Ms. Narangua (Mongolia): At the outset, allow me to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations and for the work that has been done by the United Nations system in the humanitarian sector. We fully support the observations and recommendations mentioned in the report.

In our era of globalization, the world, more than ever, needs better coordination among all countries in different fields of cooperation, including the area of humanitarian assistance at the national, regional and global levels. My delegation expresses deep concern at the increasing number and scale of natural disasters and emergencies over the past year, which have led to massive losses of life and damage to the economies of disaster-affected countries.

It is evident that each country has the primary role in taking care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory. However, the magnitude and duration of many emergencies may be beyond the response capacity of many affected countries, and in those cases assistance from the international community is of great importance.

As we are all aware, humanitarian assistance is determined on the basis of the needs arising from a particular natural disaster. In the case of my country, the heavy snowstorms and the extremely cold winter of 1999 and 2000 led to the loss of nearly 3 million heads of livestock — which represents about 9 per cent of the nation's entire livestock population — and more than one fifth of the population was affected by the worst multiple disaster in Mongolia in the last 30 years.

For most of the rural population hit by this natural calamity, the raising of cattle is the main form of economic activity and source of income. But the more alarming concern is the moral wound that the nomadic families are suffering for the death of their herds. Mongolia's territory is large, and it is not easy to deliver assistance to remote localities hit by disaster. Responses to our appeal for international assistance were quite helpful, and I would like to take this opportunity to express the deep gratitude of Mongolians for the support.

Given the scope of the damage caused to the country's economy, as well as its weakness and vulnerability, it would be extremely difficult for Mongolia to cope on its own with all the negative consequences of this disaster, which will still affect us for several more years. Winter has already started in Mongolia, and the herders face the prospect of another harsh winter and spring.

The relief operations in Mongolia offer some lessons that should be taken into consideration in future work of this nature and dimension, including a need for faster reaction to appeals, faster assessment of the disaster damage and, of course, faster implementation. As we see from the report of the Secretary-General, the overall response to international appeals is still not satisfactory.

Mongolia welcomes the increasing humanitarian aid that is being delivered on a bilateral basis. At the same time, it also stresses the importance of multilateral responses in humanitarian emergencies, in support of national efforts. Humanitarian assistance is an area in which the United Nations has considerable experience. My delegation encourages enhanced cooperation among Governments, including through the United Nations and regional organizations, as well as cooperation between the United Nations system and

regional organizations. It also encourages more active participation of non-governmental organizations and the private sector in mitigating the negative consequences of natural disasters.

As natural disasters often strike countries that lack the resources to cope adequately with them, my delegation would like to stress the need for further concrete measures to reduce the vulnerability of societies to natural hazards in these countries, including disaster reduction measures as an integral part of sustainable development strategies.

It is also worthwhile to underline the importance of transferring appropriate technologies for early warning, prevention, preparedness, mitigation and response to natural disasters, which should be made available on preferential and concessional terms.

There is also a need to consider innovative mechanisms to improve the international response to natural disasters, and my delegation believes that the United Nations will continue to play an important role in the development and improvement of humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Isakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): On the whole, the Russian delegation takes a positive view of the Secretary-General's report, "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" (A/55/82). We note a marked improvement in the quality of the report with regard to the amount of information, the depth of analysis, and specific recommendations. Russia attaches great importance to international cooperation in the field of emergency humanitarian assistance, in the first instance through the United Nations. We note with satisfaction the progress achieved in this area. Here we see the great merit of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), led at the present time by Ms. McAskie. We note the active and effective participation of OCHA in tackling the set of complex problems associated with humanitarian operations, including readiness preparation and early warning of imminent humanitarian crises.

There has been particular progress in priority areas of activity, such as policy-making, ensuring effective coordination of humanitarian operations and inculcating humanitarian principles in international life. At the same time, the increasing incidence of natural disasters, industrial disasters and other emergency situations, as well as the increase in the scale of human suffering and material losses, are presenting new tasks, both in terms of the increasing scope of humanitarian action and in terms of improving the instruments and machinery for mitigating and eliminating the effects of disasters.

The fundamental principles of humanitarian assistance remain unchanged: neutrality, humaneness, impartiality, the absence of political conditions, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and assistance given with the agreement of the affected country and in accordance with international law and national legislation. Without strict respect for all these principles by Member States, the development and improvement of international humanitarian cooperation would be unthinkable.

Running directly counter to these cardinal principles are the well-known ideas of so-called humanitarian intervention. The Millennium Summit again reaffirmed that this concept, which is inherently destructive to the whole system of international relations, is rejected by the overwhelming majority of the world community.

In this context, there is need for careful consideration of the outcome of the humanitarian segment of the most recent session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Among other things, the segment confirmed once again that the effectiveness of the United Nations work, inter alia in this important area, is decisively dependent on the constructive approach of the partners and on the presence of a basis for taking decisions based on consensus. We favour further enhancement of the effectiveness of the ECOSOC humanitarian segment as a key instrument for inter-governmental coordination of the work of the United Nations system in the humanitarian sector. It is important that this segment continue to function in a businesslike and constructive atmosphere, focusing on the coordination aspects of humanitarian work and avoiding politically sensitive problems; hence, the need for a careful and circumspect choice of the main theme of the segment. It is essential that it not be politicized, that it be of practical importance to most Member States and that it make it possible to draw more fully on the coordinating potential of ECOSOC.

A most important mechanism for coordinating emergency assistance in the United Nations system

continues to be the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which is drawing up useful recommendations for improving the humanitarian work of the United Nations. Information on what this organ is doing and its working methods should be known to the membership as a whole and should be published on a regular basis. An important role is being played by the inter-agency consolidated appeals process in terms of improving the strategic planning of emergency operations. We note the improvement in the structure, procedures for preparation and format of the appeals. We believe that the practice of launching these appeals simultaneously has proven useful. In this connection, we welcome the presentation of all the appeals for 2001 scheduled for tomorrow, and we call upon the donor community to actively respond to them in order to overcome chronic under-financing of individual appeals and the emergence of so-called forgotten emergencies.

While supporting the report's ideas on the need to strengthen multilateral humanitarian assistance, such assistance should not compete with bilateral assistance. Multilateral and bilateral assistance and the work of humanitarian non-governmental organizations must work complementarily and be taken into account in inter-agency appeals. There is real potential here, we believe, for increasing the coordinating functions of the United Nations.

We also need to improve the conditions in which humanitarian operations are conducted, particularly regarding maintaining access to the needy, as well as improving coordination in the field. The increasing number of threats to humanitarian personnel and attacks on personnel causes us particular concern. This has become particularly serious in recent years with the increasing number of fatalities and hostage-taking cases among United Nations civilian personnel. This is an intolerable situation.

It is imperative that the principles governing the provision of humanitarian assistance and the principles of international humanitarian law be observed by all parties to a conflict. In this connection, we think the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report on the safety and security of United Nations personnel, which are aimed at modernizing the machinery for protecting United Nations personnel, are very timely and useful.

In recent years we have witnessed an increase in the number of large-scale natural disasters. We very much appreciate the work of the United Nations in coordinating efforts to overcome their devastating effects. We regard as topical the section of the report on the role of technology in mitigating the effects of natural disasters and other emergency situations. However, the report confines itself to an analysis of the information, telecommunications and space technologies used in the early-warning stages and in prevention. There is, however, almost no information that would be useful to countries receiving assistance on the use of rescue technology at the recovery stage.

We are pleased that significant capacity for early warning and disaster response at the national, regional and international levels, has been developed and already works well. The United Nations, and especially OCHA, has been very active in this field. Nevertheless there remain a number of unresolved problems regarding the coordination of the operational activities of rescue services from various countries. There is no clear-cut division of labour in rescue operations. The biggest problem is the failure to make full use of specialized technologies for dealing with catastrophes. We request the Secretary-General to make recommendations on this question on the basis of an inventory to be prepared covering existing potential in this area at the international, regional and national levels. For our part, we have already submitted our own list of such technologies, which are available in Russia. We appeal to other countries with the appropriate potential in these areas to give the Secretary-General similar lists so that he can get an overall view of what is available and can establish coordination machinery for making use of these technologies globally.

We support the adoption of a draft resolution on international assistance for peace, normalcy and the rehabilitation of Tajikistan. Despite progress in the peace process and economic reform, as well as continuing international assistance, Tajikistan continues to require significant humanitarian assistance. This year the situation has been exacerbated by the drought, as well as by the growing threat of a massive influx of refugees from neighbouring Afghanistan.

We take a positive view of the international community's efforts to provide humanitarian assistance, free of discrimination, to the population of

Afghanistan. We consider it is essential to ensure safe working conditions for the humanitarian agencies and other organizations in Afghanistan.

I should like to touch upon the question of the humanitarian consequences of sanctions. To minimize the negative impact of sanctions, when a sanctions regime is being developed, consideration must be given to the impact of sanctions both on the population of the targeted country and on that of third countries. We favour humanizing sanctions and targeting them as effectively as possible. International humanitarian organizations must be removed from the effects of sanctions restrictions. Foodstuffs intended for the civilian population that have no access to food supplies, medicines and medical supplies must not come under sanctions regimes.

The fifteenth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster will be in April next year. The scale and the long-lasting nature of the effects of the largest industrial disaster in history are such as to require serious international attention. The three countries that have suffered from this disaster — Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine — therefore appeal to the United Nations to step up efforts to mobilize international assistance in order to mitigate and minimize the consequences of that disaster.

As everyone knows, notwithstanding the measures adopted by the United Nations system, the humanitarian problems in Yugoslavia remain acute. That country continues to host more than 700,000 refugees and internally displaced persons, and the overall socio-economic situation continues to worsen. The situation is particularly dire as regards the energy sector and food supplies and in the budgetary sphere.

The Russian delegation — together with 20 co-sponsors, including countries of the European Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States and Eastern and Central Europe, as well as other European States — has submitted to this session of the General Assembly a draft resolution on humanitarian assistance to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We express our deep appreciation to the countries that contributed to the reaching of an agreement on this draft resolution, and we are counting on their support along with that of all other Member States. This will truly promote the quick resolution of the acute humanitarian problems and support the recovery of Yugoslavia, as well as demonstrate the solidarity of the international community with the democratic transformations going on in that country.

Mr. Khare (India): At the outset, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for the reports that are under discussion today. They are comprehensive and respond to the importance that the international community attaches to the crucial issue of humanitarian assistance.

"Humanitarian" and "humanitarianism" are today much-abused words. Some actions may be fundamentally humanitarian in nature, though they have disastrous consequences for those populations for whose benefit they are undertaken. In many other cases, motivations are clearly self-serving and nefarious, though the consequences may be tinged with humanitarian benefits and thus provide ex post facto justifications to those who consistently act against the provisions of international law. We therefore share the view that the Secretary-General expressed on 20 November at the International Peace Academy (IPA) symposium — that within the United Nations the term needs to be, and is, more narrowly defined. Otherwise, a "cognition creep" that seeks to stretch the definition of "humanitarian" may debase the currency of the adjective itself.

The principle that humanitarian assistance must respect the needs and interests of those concerned seems to operate through the prism of donors. Where humanitarian assistance goes, and how much goes there, depends on the need of donors to soothe constituencies or conscience, the need of powerful international non-governmental organizations to have their egos massaged and the need of the largest media networks to punctuate soap operas with pictures of the great unwashed. These are all very real needs, but it would be good if, while deferring to these, the needs of those overwhelmed by a disaster or an emergency were also kept in mind. Our Secretary-General has often stressed that the sole criterion for humanitarian assistance should be human need. We must take immediate steps to redress the extremely uneven geographical and sectoral distribution of the limited funds provided for humanitarian assistance, which threatens to undermine the most basic principle of humanitarian assistance, namely, the provision of aid irrespective of political considerations.

It should worry us that the reports, and the discussion here, do not look closely enough at some serious issues.

First, there are problems related to uncoordinated humanitarian assistance — as, for example, medicines sent for disaster relief that are either past their date of usefulness or inappropriate for local conditions.

Secondly, there is the dilemma of how to get humanitarian assistance to populations at risk in areas where there has recently been conflict and where a United Nations peacekeeping operation is deployed. This assistance is often a bone of contention between parties to a conflict. As the Secretary-General noted in his address to the IPA symposium, "often we find that our impartial benevolence is not neutral in its effects". (*SG/SM/7632*)

Using a peacekeeping operation to deliver assistance frequently conveys the impression to one party or the other that the United Nations is taking sides. In some current peacekeeping operations, the provision of humanitarian assistance is put under a Chapter VII mandate, which flies in the face of reason. Humanitarian assistance cannot be provided, and certainly not sustained, under fire. We recognize that the choices here are agonizing, but they have to be addressed and thought through.

Thirdly, there is the issue of the increasing use in some recent emergencies of armed forces to deliver humanitarian assistance. Where the forces concerned are national or otherwise impartial, as the South African forces doing rescue missions so clearly were in Mozambique, the professional expertise they can bring to bear is useful. However, in at least two other recent instances, armed forces recently engaged in military operations in a country decided to take a high profile in the provision of humanitarian assistance to redeem their local image. The United Nations association with these enterprises tarnishes its image as an impartial humanitarian actor.

Fourthly, there is the increased reliance on the largesse of the private sector and transnational corporations, which must be monitored, lest it be driven not by local need, but by the commercial interests of the companies concerned in countries that are potential markets.

Fifthly, the platform provided by the Relief Web to disseminate information regarding natural disasters and other emergencies should not become a collection of uncorroborated news articles. Instead of trying to duplicate the functions of a news agency, it should concentrate, especially in this era of resource constraints, on information that would be useful for impartial humanitarian agencies and organizations in their work.

Our views on the report of the Secretary-General (A/55/82) are well known. However, a few points of detail deserve repetition. Paragraph 12 reports that several United Nations bodies are working to improve mechanisms for early warning and preparedness in complex humanitarian emergencies. There is no mandate for this. Particularly when resources are scarce, the funds and programmes and specialized agencies should concentrate on their main task of promoting development. We note that a donors meeting has recommended that non-governmental organizations help to set strategy. Non-governmental organizations certainly have a role to play in humanitarian assistance, but strategies must be formulated only under the leadership of the Government of the affected country. Clear distinctions must continue to be maintained between political, humanitarian and human rights components of the United Nations response. The Security Council has no role either in developing or applying international humanitarian law. We therefore do not agree with paragraphs 20 and 21, which do not accurately reflect the agreed conclusions of the 1999 Economic and Social Council humanitarian affairs segment. On the protection of civilians and children in armed conflict, we do not believe that the Security Council's resolution was helpful, or has made any difference. We agree with the thrust of paragraph 112 that Governments have the primary responsibility for the internally displaced. International action must be at the request of the Governments concerned. We do not share the opinion expressed in paragraph 118 that some Governments might not have the capacity or be willing to discharge their responsibilities. No evidence has been presented for this sweeping charge.

We hope that future reports will not be marred by drafting that carelessly ignores political realities or sensitivities, as, for example, paragraph 22, which speaks of "integrated peace operations", a concept on which no international consensus yet exists.

A new dimension to these debates is provided by the rising interventionist impulse, based on the implicit theory that all would be well were the developed

countries and non-governmental organizations in charge, and duly elected representative Governments — never mind the resolute commitment of the Millennium Declaration to promote democracy — were bypassed.

Under such circumstances, assistance cannot be divorced from the economic or political calculations of the giver, and may revive the insecurities of a bygone era. The new century should not dawn with the threat of a new North-South divide. Deep concern about humanitarian crises should not obscure the reality that actions are prone to being viewed through a political prism. It is clear that the emergence of the principle of armed intervention to redress humanitarian issues would set us on a perilous slope and would be likely to soon exhaust the capabilities of our permanently cash-starved Organization and diminish the credibility that it enjoys. We therefore fully share the views of the Secretary-General that we must "get right away from using the term 'humanitarian' to describe military operations".

All of these problems can be averted through scrupulous adherence to the guiding principles for humanitarian assistance. These, however, are honoured more in the breach than in the observance. There are also guiding principles on internally displaced persons prepared by the Secretary-General's Special Representative, which do not have intergovernmental approval. However, it is these that the United Nations system seems to find most attractive. I will not repeat the full mantra of resolution 46/182, but we do urge the United Nations system to honour it.

India has always accorded the highest importance to the provision of humanitarian assistance which fully respects the guiding principles laid down by the General Assembly. We have, despite strained resources, provided humanitarian assistance, in the spirit of South-South solidarity, to those affected by natural disasters or other humanitarian emergencies. At the same time, we have not sought humanitarian assistance, attempting to respond, within our abilities and through our own domestic efforts, to the natural disasters that befell us, in the true spirit of the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance, which clearly indicate that the primary responsibility for the initiation, coordination and provision of humanitarian assistance lies with the affected country — although, of course, we are deeply grateful for the assistance extended by others, as a true reflection and expression of human solidarity.

India places great store on state-of-the-art technologies, such as remote sensing, geographical information systems, the Global Positioning System, computer modelling and expert systems and electronic information management, in response to natural disasters. Technological advances can also play a major role in strengthening disaster prevention and preparedness capacities, and we in India are making every effort to utilize them, through the establishment of a Natural Disaster Knowledge Network, a Hazard Mapping and Vulnerability Assessment, including the preparation of a Vulnerability Atlas of India, and a Disaster Warning System. We strongly believe that the emphasis placed by the Secretary-General on science and technology, including the transfer of technology to developing countries, is one of the main issues that must be at the forefront of the international agenda.

Timely humanitarian action in many countries has been compromised by the deliberate targeting of civilians and humanitarian workers, as well as by the denial of access. I wish to convey my delegation's deep appreciation and admiration for the dedication and commitment with which many relief and assistance organizations and personnel, both within and outside the United Nations, are functioning under the most difficult and trying conditions to bring succour to those in need. The threats faced by humanitarian personnel, as well as by United Nations staff, have been clearly brought out in the Secretary-General's report (A/55/494). We are concerned that these have shown a tendency to increase, as have the threats and violence against all those protected under international humanitarian law.

We salute those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the promotion of our causes, and trust that such cases will become rare, and, hopefully, cease, in the years to come. However, we need to undertake serious introspection if the increasing attacks on humanitarian aid workers are the result of humanitarian assistance being perceived as biased and hence as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution. It is clear that the safety and security of humanitarian assistance will not be ensured by signing United Nations conventions or adopting resolutions of this Assembly. It can be ensured only when humanitarian assistance is perceived to be genuinely impartial and neutral and provided in accordance with the guiding principles so clearly enunciated by the General Assembly in resolution 46/182.

I would now like to refer to the agenda item on assistance to the Palestinian people. India, despite its own limitations, has been contributing to the process of assistance to the Palestinian people through scholarships and cultural exchange programmes. India provided specialized training to 41 candidates from Palestine during the period April 1999 to March 2000, bringing to a total of 200 the number of Palestinians trained in India in the past four years. All expenditure on training costs, including boarding and lodging, is borne by the Government of India. India also pledged $1 million at the Washington donor's conference in October 1995 and a further $1 million at the subsequent pledging conference in Paris in January 1996. These pledges have already been honoured through full disbursement. At the third donor's conference, held in Washington on 30 November 1998, India pledged an additional $1 million in assistance to Palestine. Of this, a sum of $300,000 has already been disbursed to Al-Azhar University in Gaza for the construction of two additional floors for its library, with the remainder being utilized for human resource development activities.

Although we will take up the item on Afghanistan later, I should like to say that the humanitarian situation there is assuming serious proportions. The majority of the Afghan people are unable to enjoy their most fundamental human rights, owing to the accumulated effects of the warfare currently being forced upon the people of Afghanistan by the Taliban and their foreign mentors; searing poverty; profound underdevelopment; and the policies and practices of the Taliban. Continuing discrimination against girls, women and religious minorities is of great concern. We demand that the Taliban authorities revoke discriminatory practices instituted by them against the minorities, in particular, the requirement that they wear on their persons special signs of identification. The forced displacement of the civilian population by the Taliban, the torching of residential houses, the burning of crops, the cutting down of fruit trees, the deliberate destruction of the sparse infrastructure, including the irrigation system, the indiscriminate aerial bombing of civilians and the denial of access not only impede the provision of relief material to thousands of internally displaced persons, but are contributing to the great misfortune caused by the drought, which continues to take a heavy toll.

We have contributed to alleviating the suffering of the Afghan people as best we can by sending humanitarian assistance. Over the past decade alone, we have provided, both bilaterally and through the United Nations system, assistance valued at more than 185.5 million rupees, in addition to organizing camps for the fitting of artificial limbs and the provision of crutches, among other measures. We hope that the constraints on humanitarian assistance that have been outlined by the Secretary-General will soon be overcome.

My statement has been rather long, but the provision of humanitarian assistance is an extremely complex and difficult task. We admire the work that has been done by the United Nations system and the dedication of the men and women, at Headquarters and the field, who bring this assistance to those in need. But both because it is so complex, and because it needs to be done right — the consequences of failure, neglect or caprice being so enormous — we have to be constantly self-critical. That is the spirit in which I have spoken.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.